THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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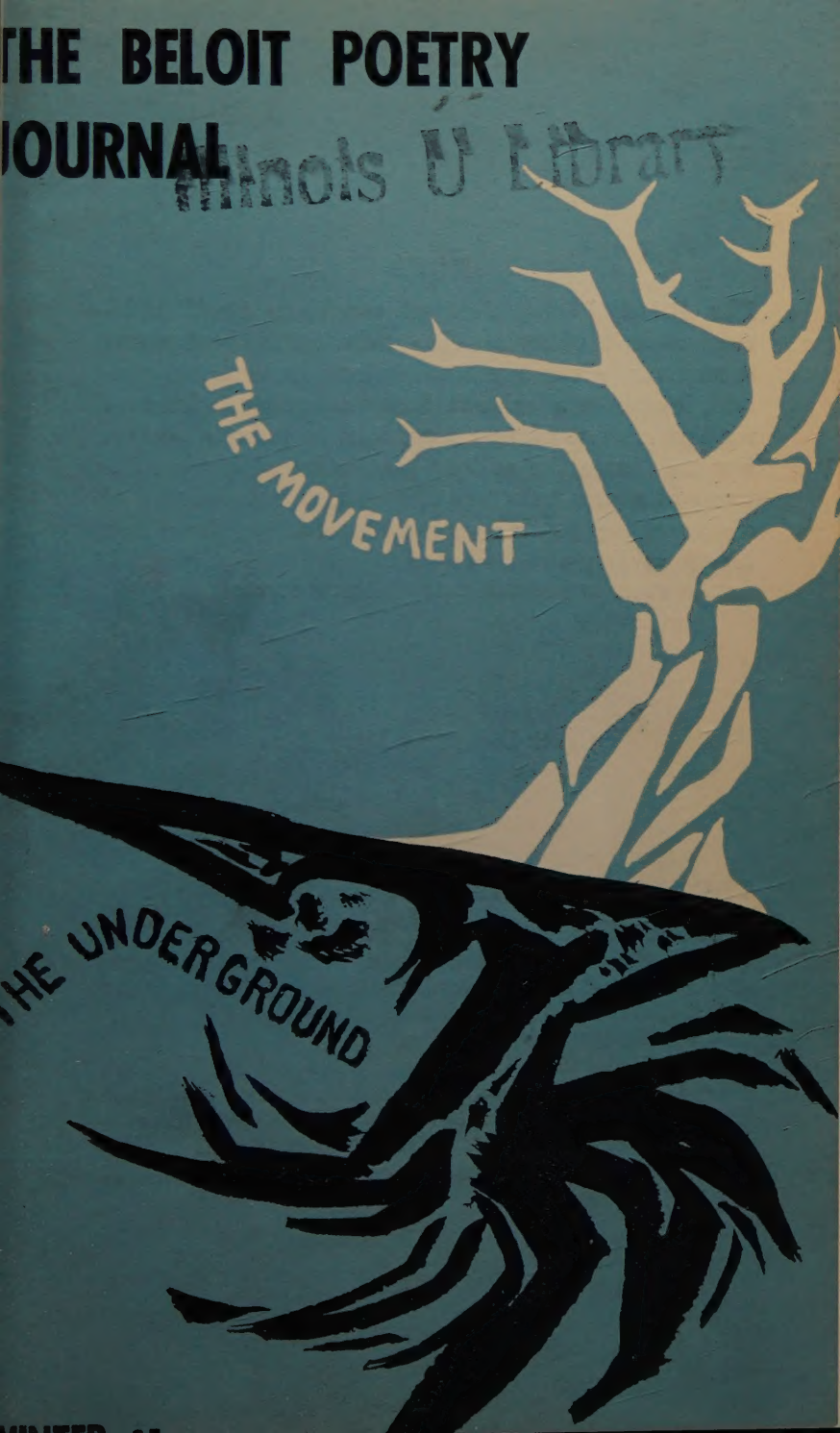

NOTE

The Beloit Poetry Journal considers itself independent in its editorial policy, printing the best poems it receives, without preconceptions as to form, content, length, or allegiance. It also attempts to keep its readers abreast of new directions in today's poetry. For this issue the editors have selected representative new poems from two of the most controversial of contemporary poetic movements and have asked Paris Leary in England and James Boyer May in California each to provide introductory comments.

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AN AMERICAN VIEW

This work bristles revolt against a modern classicism foisted upon a long-dwindling audience for new poetry, and which has fostered credulity that poetry is dying and only older things are worth reading. Many of these always will be worth reading, to be sure; but not the adept imitations which have comprised the other category of late-years compositions which has been touted by another school of criticism and crammed into the anthologies. Most people seeking what's new, regrettably have been hoodwinked. There *is* also much living poetry.

Yes, throughout "decline," free spirits have been pouring freshness into traditional forms and making modern applications of ancient myths, and evolving new forms and composing contemporary parables. They are the neo-romantic, individualistic seers of the magic of analogy. They madden orthodox judges; but they are commencing to restore poetry audience.

Some of the more confounding expressions from what's rather inaccurately called the American Underground (and with the innuendo that they'd jolly well better *stay* down there too) have been selected by the editors of this magazine, not by the writer. Diversity of rude, even crude, dissidence (with concededly-diverse success) and predominating pessimism are seen here. This is not a condemnation. Both are logical and justifiable means for aiding man to regain realization of his intrinsic need for the dramatization of never-fulfilled search after meaning in the universe. Shock may be the only effective expediency; and, not unexpectedly, some administrators of this desperate treatment will prove ill-qualified and some just out for "kicks."

Exigencies of space permit neither detailed consideration of these poems nor an historical survey;

however, a key lies in the acknowledgment by one of them, Gil Orlovitz, to Rainer Maria Rilke. And although Rilke commonly is mentioned as having been influenced by Baudelaire, the record in beginning perspective indicates that his has been a prime influence in America, and England also, to revive, in modern contexts, the imaginative and emotional emphasis of early Nineteenth Century English-language poets, who carried on both from Blake and Cowper.

Outstanding, in "far out" modern romantics, besides their alive expressions (which also characterize less-radical and better tolerated poets either too polite or not moved by major concerns), is an unashamed earnestness declared irrelevant by careful academy critics who really are rationalizing avoidances of fearsome truths. No need to document the obvious—that enduring *major* literature has comprised more than semantical jigsaws or brilliant imitative rhetoric upon less-crucial themes. And not arguing that even competent poems (if there are such things) inevitably spring from the most shining honesties. Rather, to put a sharp light on what is central to the work meant here, while admitting that *mere* neoterical (often strained) phrases simply focusing environment and conjuring sensations, add to no greatness.

Declaring that thought has become so concentrated on pragmatical physical realms, particularly data bearing upon bodily health and comfort, that more humanbeings are left more worried than ever, in a faith-weak era, is just old hat. And intelligent people are aware that the finest semantic exactitudes pull no rabbits of healing revelation out of that hat. And yet, even poets, themselves, are astoundingly slow to see how true poetry can help. That is, poetry undertaking to express whole purpose in whole man. And to answer the objection that 100 percent accomplishment of this is impossible, reference need only be made to an ancient wisdom, that perfection would

render the very consciousness to create *anything* superfluous.

Many have noted how the sciences exceed themselves, trying to solve what no science can solve. Also, that science's requisite particularity of language leads but to *non*-communication, when diverted to the complexities of speculative imagination. But what seems unclear to many is that today's musings, loaded with connotative ramifications and layers-upon-layers of simultaneous meanings, *demand* multi-dimensional language. Attempted objective scrutinies of pages-and-pages of minute brittle images entail (assuming these compilations are not indiscriminate!) abandonment of recognition for the essential condensation which makes poetry.

For, in recent decades, "authorities" have been judging poems with total disregard for the crux of creativity, that *all knowledge is subjective.* In the long long end, after all hashings and rehashings, the only thing that matters is subjective impact within a reader. This does go back to the way a poem was made in the first place. But, these critics have been analyzing details, without first reading wholes, for transferences (if any), and to ascertain whether writers met any challenge of opposition involving genuine endeavor to realize some facet of fulfillment. This not only has perverted and subverted their findings, but has ignored that each real poet must be speaking from his own unique frame in his own idiom; and if this is not accounted primary, poor receptivity is assured. Every serious poet deserves that his effectiveness be gauged by the results obtained by his own methods, not those fixed upon by a critic. And there is no other fair basis for comparisons. This is what this writer would like readers of this magazine to bear in mind while enjoying the exciting work gathered here.

James Boyer May

TREASON

Colyngbourne crossed a King with a poem
and inherited new gallows on *Tower Hill,*
and they cut him down while he still bubbled
and tore out his disenchanted bowels
and tossed them in the fire by his side
where they sputtered and curled like live snakes,
and the butcher put his hand into the hole
of his body
and moved the fingers
like a suckling red spider,
(and the trees stood watching without comment
and a bird flew by
wings-to-body, wings-out
bouncing boundless in the sky
like a rock thrown downhill;)

and the butcher sliced away
his testicles and his manhood
with one small blot; and
a bloodless eye larger than the moon
stared into his brain,
and he said,
"Oh Lord Jesus, yet more trouble," and,
victoriously,
died.

Richard III, stale with vengeance
slid the small ring upon his little finger
and felt
that men died too easily and
not often enough:

The Cat, the Rat and Lovell our dog
Rule all England under an Hog.

he watched the first fly settle
upon the viscid edge of the hole,
tremble eagerly with legs,
withdraw a moment
awed with the size of the prize,
and then flatten itself
to feed;

he spate, smiled, and turned as a King should turn
(already he seemed to smell the fumes of decay)
and clapped his hands flatly
like two wicked boards sounding
for some jester with a flagon
of self-abasement and vertigo
to make him forget
that for a moment the fly
had seemed to look upon him
with its thousand eyes
and flicked its
filthy awkward stinging snout
toward him
as if it had sensed the
tangled viscera that
sucked and puffed and pulled
the thin living silver
through his body.

ah, but visions and dragons and nothings!

the fool ran, belled and gesturing,
toward him
and the fly
frightened
rose from the poet
and circled about the monarch's head
like some fat drunken bee

readying to raze a flower . . .

the King slapped out
and missed
and decided the jester too
must die.

Charles Bukowski

TWO POTS ON A HOTPLATE

It was a beat, bent, battered thing, but boilable,
Perched—this percless 'lator—next the glue-pot
in the casement.
My guess, anybody's guess how long these new
grounds
grafted on old buds
Had withstood well-wish of water or seam-scour of
suds,
Nor yet recall from sweeter-reared remembrance,
if rancid right remaindered
Regularly reflected was in reason or in rime?

No saw nor sense to standing so, but there to shod
the slip-shelf steely-wise
It seemed a sesquitarian stump as though all shell
broke loose and slumped the ingle cell.

A caution uncraven, this caffeine carriage
with crenelated crest more crass than clue
To craftsman crew confined within its coil;
Toil took its tithe of sickened thenses, as
We tipped the brue lusch in the gopfee bod
and grank the dlue.

James Hiner

NOT

not the commander grinning through the periscopic
bowel,
not the butterfly masses sucking pyramids they
wormed,
not god with his totem earth, not the devil with red
suspenders,
not the sweating angel, not the potpourri ape,
nor a moment to be lost, not a love that giggles
ghastly
over green gall and greasy ghosts, not the woman
engineered from a mans squib, not my life
nor yours nor the hairshirt of history,
not the slimemould chewing gum, not the hairpin
penis
for a monsveneris permanent wave, not the epileptic
clown,
not the jolly specialist addressing the whole conven-
tion,
not bathing beauties springing leaks, not the foam-
titted sea,
not the storm with the heart of a haggle, not jezebel
jelly,
not jesus jerking off, not mohammet with his coeds,
not confucius with scotch&soda in the mens club at
dusk,
not while theres time, not the housefly taking baths
in eyes
not the weathervane tattooed on my windpipe, not
moses
cracking his knuckles as the thoushaltnots bored
him,
not the Old Testicle nor the New Testicle nor the
Hypocrypha,

not the hydrostatics of spit, not the dynamics of
gored mirrors,
not magnetism laying an egg, not the condoms
of executives from saudi arabia to death valley
with prickly heat on the grass roots of profit and
loss,
not gothic spiders, not arthritic architecture, not the
matadors
in hysterical capes corkscrewing through the mu-
seum of bulls,
not while theres a stone unturned, not for a minute,
not that you know, not that theres anything to hide,
not for anything, not for all the jade in china,
not for the reason you think, not the old men
with their tomahawk memories, not the old masters
urging purring electricity to lap at the milk,
not atlas with his base on balls, not the smiling
little boys with their equation-mustaches, not the
revolutionaries
stroking the convulsives into catalepsy, not the
financiers
pissing silvergray numeralhairs into steel urinals,
not the artists riding their paranoid nags to sacrifice,
not the general astride his hydrogen fart,
not squashed insects dreaming of bubbling light,
not the north and south poles in their vast owls of ice,
not black and white and yellow tungstens of hate,
not the bunomastodontidae of industry
with the openhearth tusk and the whanging gut
and their salesmens suburban fury, not the nerve low
on radar,
not the children wading in the waters of their
mothers and fathers,
not my love my woman with the tiny blue trumpets
in her eyes,

not the people waiting in their stalls to be saddled
with bright
jockeys, not the spirituals or the blues on the four-
footed tremors,
not the moviestars posing on the drums of stills,
not the twilight my darling my love pausing in my
throat,
not the friends impacted wisdomteeth at grief and
death,
not the sandpipers tacking dartburs along the shore,
not the last of the suns snowballs at the moon,
not the kitchenwall copperware chiming the sizes of
home,
not the tv comic thinning under the spotlights bald-
spot,
not the sprocketwheels in the deaf mans ear tugging
at his eye,
not the tears trapped in the wilds like small game,
not the woman intent on calisthenics in the coffin
to lose weight, no, no, not anything like that,
not while theres time, not while theres time, not
while theres time.

Gil Orlovitz

POETRY, BANANA, WIFE AND THE SONNET

1. Once upon a time, poetry was poetry.
And all the metaphor, and unmetrics
In the world. And more. Were poetry's.
Like Spring, for example, she was full
Of Monkey, Testicle, Fact and myth.

And the ape, and the ape-woman, sang.
Also they grunted, and they sounded;
Said-grunts . . . and body-sounds

Are better than any words. And then
There certainly was not no prose.

The yesterday, and the day before
And even that very every-day
God had never ceased to be saying,
Let there be not no damn prose!
And there was light. And the sonnet.

The sonnet slid along the iambs
That have always been its belly,
And said unto the female
Of the apes, *Ma chère, j'aime beaucoup*
Votre grognement vers libre—

And he gave unto her pencil, thesaurus
Paper . . . and said, *da dah, da dah;*
And rhyming up her thigh, he caesura'd
Tried an anapest, giggled and said,
Ma chère: this, my dear, is poetry.

That tickles! she said. And he said,
Now mind the metric!—trochee'd her.
And she began to come unto him: *oh Dear*
. . . ohdear, ohdear-ohdear, O
C'est ça! c'est ça; vive le metre!

2. And unto her dearly beloved, . . . *darling*
Banana, she said, . . . *dearest*
Why don't we ever rhyme, or scan?
And he ate of an iamb. And the Lord
God passed from out of their unmetrics

Saying unto them . . . *In the sweat*
Of thine brow thou shalt labor
But not sing thine vers libre;
And from out of thine scansions
Thou shalt Spring but damnéd prosody!

Robert S. Sward

AUTOPSY REPORT ON THE BODY OF A FAMOUS GENERAL

See
there is a river running through him
stuffed with pictures like a reel of film
unwinding

he seems to have miles of death in him
he flows so easily
and all medallion victories disappear

our knife locates no conscience
no crucifix god leaps angrily out
waving a battleflag

nothing comes out but bourbonblood

he never really had a name of flesh
or a pound of love in his liver

empty him of his nothingness

see
his muscles quiver at our prodding
and we explore his red wet kingdom
finding no feeding inner man
for all is waste all is swamp

his fingers stiffen on parade
and blue veins whiten
like attentive West Point cadets

see
his head falls back like an open valise

his adam never had an apple
and his skull spills white lard of armies
marching into sewers of limbo

a flick of blade
his eye squeaks of a burning city
like a fading TV tube
and all memory banks enter bankruptcy

see
he was a plunderer educated to plunder
death was a constant cousin to him

who knows
maybe we are twins dying of the same sickness

who knows
perhaps we may not be able to survive him?

Leslie Woolf Hedley

THE EGO I

As if he wore among such ugliness
a single horn of beauty on his head,
long maned, long tailed, the ego I
pierced by the worst, still will prance his pride,

surprising women with an ivory nudge
—discovered gored on divans in the night—
and pause at every glass and glance his love,
trotting toward extinction thought by thought

or so he thinks. As final dodos drop
and mastodons turn up their drastic hooves,
innumerably grazing, pastured in the mind,
this ubiquitous unicorn survives.

Harold Witt

A PARABLE

And they gathered in a field, around him, the multitude
laying down their adding machines on the ground beside them,
casting off their cloaks of Congressional immunity, and
dipping their feet into the grass-roots, and
sipping coca-colas; and they gathered close around him.

And one of the multitude, a man of rotund appearance,
a changer of coins, said unto him, asking:
What, oh Master of the World, is the meaning of Sorrow?

And the Master answered him, saying:
I had when I was young and possessed of a poet's heart,
a goose of fine feather and a green glass bottle.
Unfortunately, the goose was *in* the bottle,

and my sorrow had no end in that I could not
drink from the bottle nor fondle my fat goose.

And the multitude listened to the Master, yet fretted
with the keys of their adding machines and noisily
sucked
on their straws. But the changer of coins, he of the
rotund
demeanor, was attentive, and sorely dissatisfied,
and he said unto the Master: What, oh Teacher
of the Mysteries of Death, became of the goose,
and how were you able to overcome your grief?

And the Teacher of the Simplicities of Life said unto
him:
One day as I contemplated the beauty of my goose,
and meditated on his emerald feathers,
I concluded that a goose
of such great size
belonged in larger quarters,
and I did then pet my goose and smooth
his feathers while drinking a cooling beverage
of verdant color from my lovely empty green bottle.

And at this the usurer was consumed with rage and
three young
accountants were constrained to ease him down onto
the clover
field lest he burst into a flaming hate, and be totally
consumed
in it. But whilst this took place, yet another pecu-
niary personage,
of a similar rotundity, came close unto the Exemplar
of All Good
and beseeched him to further elucidate upon the
assuagement

of grief, whereupon the Betrayer of All Evil reached
down
near the hem of his garment and picked up a water-
rounded stone,
and after tossing it to and fro, from hand to hand,
while the eyes of the multitude flickered like a ticker-
tape,
he threw the stone with great force, straight up into
the sky,
until it was a mere speck, and then
was seen no more
at all.

And then the multitude rumbled inside itself,
and there were occasional wroth words to be heard
between the furious chatterings of the adding ma-
chines
and the swishing of cloaks and the raucous stutter-
ings of straws.
And then one figure, more prepossessing in his garb
and girth
than any other, appeared from the midst of the
throng, and,
making conciliatory gestures to the multitude, ap-
proached
the Inspirer of All Poetry and questioned him, say-
ing:
What, oh Coiner of Words (and in so addressing him
sought to lend flattery to his speech),
is the meaning of Life?

And the Creator of the Living Word
turned away from this pusher
of buttons and, lifting his face,
but not uttering a single syllable,
pointed to the rising crescent moon
coming up over the eastern edge of the clearing.

Upon observing that the eyes of the entire multitude
were gravely and expectantly fastened upon the tip
of his finger,
the Liver of the Creating Word made a sound which,
had there been
another observer, would have been likened unto the
sound
which a frog makes when it hops into a pond.

And behold! the field,
wherein the multitude,
with its adding machines,
cloaks of immunity,
grass-trampling feet
and coca-colas
had stood,
withered and dried
until every vestige
of bloated belly, cogwheel, thread, or caffeined liquid
had completely and utterly vanished and not a dead
or living thing
remained but sparkling crystals of silica.

And the Master of the World turned away his face
from the glitter of the sand and cried,
and great tears fell from his eyes
and mixed with the sand
forming islands of mirth
and peninsulas of joy.
And the Child of Wonder fell down upon his hands
and knees
and began to build castles of sand,
with moats of tears.
And he forgot to cry
and never spoke again.

William J. Margolis

THE CIGAR HISTORY

Cicada glitter—
Transparent wings and tapered form—
Lazy hover in the loafing weather
Like a flippant feather
Over tropical tobacco plants;
From the insect shape stems the Cigar History,
The cylinder of mystery.

Columbus sailing,
Sailed to discover the cigar for Europe,
And soon in the nimble salons of nobility
Professors with persuasive mobility
Lectured choking audiences
On the art of pursing lips and blowing smoke that clings
Slithering on graceful rings.

In the puffpaste air
Of St. Peters clogged with the haze of cheap cigars,
Innocent X threatened to cut off smokers from communion.
Tense at his task of union
Between the Holy Trinity,
Pope Urban VIII issued a Bull against crass
Priests who smoked while saying Mass.

Colonial dames,
Broadbeamed in primitive America, smoked and
Wrapped cigars to sell to wandering peddlers;
Cardinal Newman damned those meddlers
Mechanizing the soul's eternity—
The Manchester capitalists with their gold-initialed belts—
As "Corpulent Cigar-Welts."

Facile and fluid
In cigar factories, at their wrapping and filling,
Workers rolled to the roaring rhythm of a chanter
Reading the *Lusiads* like a ranter.
Tired of shaping cigars
In a Spanish sweat-shop, one simmering spring day
Carmen fled with Don José.

Dryly, Kipling wrote:
"A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar
Is a smoke." But so dour and lonely
Sounds his word *only*
When you think of George Sand
Puffing with cigars and lovers, a seductive lady,
If a little shady.

James Schevill

THE WHITE WHALE, THE WHITE WHALE

Relv if ever the sweet parts tender
the dream if wrung
from soul of dark
my dream is hard as only flesh
where blood is strong as bone

Relv if over
lover come
the sweat as warm and wreathed
and fragrant as the hour's end

Relv sweet meek
sweet bold and break
and tender as the dream we cherish
dream as tall as the bedding's tent
whales as ever lost
and waves
rolling as ever in lost in waves
forever rolling in sea's lost waves
and break

Relv for meek the sweet lost cry
warm as breaking from deepest sleep
the foam as wrapped as we
in cline
for Relv if soul
in hell lost slumber, lost as breaking
and your sweet cry on voiceless lips
breaking there from deepest deep

Judson Crews

THE MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND

An American friend wrote to me after reading *New Lines* that he was unable to understand why it raised such a storm in England. He liked the anthology, and found most of it very competent poetry indeed, but he quite failed to see what there was in the book to provoke such passionate outcries of approval and disapproval. What he really meant was that the poems were not at all *experimental.* They were not *avant-garde,* they did not infuriate the casual reader with obscurity, odd form, or difficult language, and the transatlantic temperament seems not to find any poetry upsetting which is not in some way *avant-garde* or eccentric.

This is precisely, however, why the "new movement" poets are so revoluntionary. In an age in which the prevailing poetic expression *has* been experimental, a rejection of its methods and ambitions as sloppy, unintelligent, and phony has a revolutionary quality of its own. The "movement" has little use for what Mr. Robert Conquest describes in the preface to *New Lines* as "Residual nuisances like the Social-realists, the Lallans-mongers, the church furnishers, and the neo-Georgians . . ." Mr. Conquest suggests that the task of the new movement in English poetry is *the restoration of intelligence* to the art of poetry. For all their differences, the *New Lines* sort of poets have this in common—*good writing.* Their poetry is grounded in intelligence, its language is concise, colloquial, and contemporary in a way which makes the

imitators of Eliot, Pound, or Barker seem dated. Good writing is the badge of the "movement", and clarity is its aim. In a period subjected to one form of experimentation after another, the act of calling a conscious halt to the whole business, the restoration of common sense and conscientious craftsmanship to poetry, is quite as revolutionary as the merely eccentric or *avant-garde* movements which, for example, seem to fecundate so thickly in America.

An insight, however, must not be hardened into a creed, and the "movement" poets would be the first to admire the really good romantics like Hopkins, Hart Crane, David Wright, or the more mature Dylan Thomas; but their broadsides against fake, free-verse, romantic Id-probing, untidy writing, and diffuse emotional language have surely cleared the air of the sort of nonsense which passed for poetry in so much post-war writing. Their attacks on romanticism (which has come to be the cover-all word for their dislikes) have also served the useful purpose of helping to bring forward other poets than themselves into the limelight they deserve. They would, I think, consider Robert Graves a major poet and admire the sort of thing his poetry stands for; some of them have written enthusiastically of Empson and Muir, and one of them, at least, of R. S. Thomas. The point is that their criticisms have at least cleared the way for a more rational and urbane evaluation of contemporary poetry.

Their own poetry is easy to understand—their boast, not their shame, as it might have been to a neo-romantic poet of the '40's. Without failing to recognise the oblique nature of reality, it is readily accessible to the understanding without special knowledge of Freud, Jung, the footnotes in *The Golden Bough,* Chinese ideographs, or suspension of the ordinary critical faculties of the intellect. They

have brought to poetry a skillful use of really contemporary language and an abhorrence of the messy and over-emotional. When their poems do pack an emotional wallop it is always by the most critical and scupulous honesty that the wallop comes through. Mr. Philip Larkin's much-discussed *Church Going*, Miss Elizabeth Jennings' *A Way Of Looking*, Mr. John Holloway's *Elegy For An Estrangement*, Mr. Donald Davie's *Remembering The 'Thirties* (the signature poem of the "movement") are all examples of this refusal to go all Dionysian without the Appollonian and ratiocinative rider. They subject their poetic experience to an analysis and process of selectivity as close and honest as Wittgenstein or Ayer would demand of any linguistic expression of experience. They have their faults, chiefly in this area where they excell—a tendency to be too much concerned with the epistemology of poetic experience, and it is a tendency which, if unchecked, will only make them stop writing, for logical positivitism, even in its well-bred British guise, is ultimately anti-poetic. But at their best they are very good indeed, and their influence will be even better—particularly, for reasons intimated above, in the United States.

Paris Leary

TWO POEMS

Zeuxis of Crotona

Compose his own ideal
As to the sun-carved form,
Its contents still remain:
"All, and a few, are real,
The virgin's glance is warm,
The high breasts weep, or reign."

But stone can only win
Such permanence for love
If art be artefact
Reciprocated in
The high harmonics of
Love, of the midnight act.

"Yet woman, flesh, or stone,
Is good—the symbol or
The object of an art,
Preserving the unknown
Although its lights explore
Deep in her form, her heart . . ."

Robert Conquest

Birmingham

Enright country: his images
Suck the smoke through the sky, grow tall
Among pillars of fire by day and night
And roar under Snow Hill Station.
All that is left
Is a green park, voices of girls and birds,
The common undenominated roads, and glass
At heights and angles of impersonality.

And to speak quite simply, as in all of them,
Over the beer in the bar's corner,
In the ambience of women and their scent,
Under the sky's ochre or the sky's blue,
Whoever the poet, he must be seeking
The multiple vision he can make one
—One town, one life.

Robert Conquest

PARTING SONG

How easy to return, yet have no share
In what was once our own, to bring no vow,
To lose a god and leave a statue there.

So quietly they left us; even now
Chance could be miracle, an echo born
Of silence (as it seems) could so endow

Our voices, we would seem to praise, not mourn.
But, not to-night, or, not when I am here,
I say, though trusting always that a dawn

Must come, when they will silently draw near,
And when to one who waits by chance alone
An individual vision will appear.

But now, perhaps, it may be best to own
That they will never come, that all our care
Is not to summon them, but to atone:

Their very absence is a cause for prayer.

Peter Ferguson

TWO POEMS

The Critic

No art, designed to advertise a joke,
Prompted his essays or engaged his fame,
No eyes could answer what his sour tongue spoke,

Rehearsed for the taproom and the poets shame.
A dead loss suicide, he cast the die:
No marriage now would change his true love's name

But touched to the quick he was not slow to try
For flesh was sweeter nearer to the bone;
He would not love what money could not buy

So pays the price to bed the muse at home,
Convinced at last the poet needs conviction
No mirror needed now, except the poem,

He separates desire from distraction,
For he'd be first admitting his defeat
And contemplate love without reflection . . .

Performing always this difficult feat.

George Hartley

Body and Soul

The mystics make their flesh a home for God
And this is love beyond our wildest dreams,
But patient scholars have the right to plod
To prove the candle burnt at both extremes.

Yet obvious errors win the needed charm
For sage observers make the same mistake;

No gaseous vertebrate gets near to warm,
So he loves best who gives what he can take.

This mirage which they beg the soul to crave
Was subject to the object of their love,
And, when the will refused, they could not brave,
The absence that they never hoped to prove:

"My soul doth magnify" and like a glass
That's curved to hold the dissipated sun,
Refracts a heat which consecrates a mass—
Not sure of how to melt they could not run.

They saw the light but felt the point of heat
(The bag of filth they could not hope to burst)
Refractory to the flesh they hoped to cheat;
A woman was salvation for the cursed,

And so, it seems, the language to describe
Erotic facts must clothe the naked soul.
"The poetry's in the paradox," we cried;
Yet smoke without a fire begins to pall.

Now their glass love reflects our new desires,
For supple love would make us bend proud necks
And, as we sink, rekindles all her fires
Where twofold love unites the double sex.

George Hartley

LARGER TRUTH

Round Fforestfach, Llansamlet and elsewhere
Some people (it being half-past five)
Are going home from work, or whatever they do,
  Or wherever they live.

Others work at night, or are still working
At more different things than I could name,
Or work further away; wherever I stood
  I wouldn't see any of them.

It takes a novelist to say *In Swansea*
(Just show us on the map) *people* (all right)
Were (as one man?) *packing up work* (one kind?)
  And going home (one street?).

Don't plead it's shorthand; he's not through yet.
He sardine-cans us but he plots too,
Merrily pigeonholing what we're up to
  And what we think we're up to,

(That is our *donnée*, as it were, *mon bon*—
That complex, perennially fascinating)
As if they were separate, or as if we thought
  We were up to anything.

Yawning, smoking, dozing, chatting, staring,
Waiting for something, feeling a bit queasy,
He gives a meaning to, or says there's none:
  Plotting again, you see.

It takes a poet to go one stage further,
To pick stuff like this for his harangue,
To pretend that giving or denying meaning
  Means anything.

Kingsley Amis

TWO POEMS

Kyoto in Autumn

Precarious hour. Moment of charity and the
less usual love.

Mild evening. Even taxis now fall mild.
Grey heart, grey city, grey and dusty dove.

Retiring day peers back through paper windows;
here and there a child
Digs long-lost treasure from between her feet.

Where yesterday the sun's staff beat,
where winter's claws tomorrow sink,
The silent ragman picks his comfort now.

The straitened road holds early drunkards
like a stronger vow;
The season's tang renews the burning tongue.

Poetic weather, nowhere goes unsung,
However short the song. A pipe's smoke prints
Its verses on the hand-made paper of that sky;

And under lanterns leaping like struck flints,
a potter's novice squats
And finds his colours in the turning air.

A pallid grace invests the gliding cars.
The Kamo keeps its decent way, not opulent nor bare.
The last light waves a fading hand. Now fiercer seasons
start like neon in the little bars.

D. J. Enright

The Noodle-Vendor's Flute

In a real city, from a real house,
At midnight by the crackling roads:
Hearing the noodle-vendor's flute,
Two single fragile falling notes . . .
But what can this small singsong do
To drown the noise of war?
The flute itself a counterfeit
(Siberian wind can freeze the lips)
Merely a rubber bulb and metal horn
(Hard to ride a cycle, watch for manholes
And late drunks, and play a flute together).
Just squeeze between gloved fingers,
And the note of mild hope sounds:
Release the indrawn sigh of mild despair . . .
A poignant signal, like the cooee
Of some diffident soul locked out,
Less than appropriate to cooling macaroni.
Two wooden boxes slung across a cycle,
A rider in his middle age, trundling
This gross contraption on a dismal road,
Red eyes and nose and breathless rubber horn.
Yet still the pathos of that double tune
Defies its provenance, and can warm
The bitter night. Sleepless, we turn and sleep.
Or sickness dwindles to some local limb.
Bought love for one long moment gives itself.
While here a witch assures a frightened child
She bears no personal grudge. And I,
Like other listeners, see my stupid sadness
As a common thing. And being common,
Therefore something rare indeed.
The puffing vendor, surer than a trumpet,

Tells us we are not alone.
Each night that same frail midnight tune
Squeezed from a bogus flute,
Under the noise of war, after war's noise,
It mourns the fallen, every night,
It celebrates survival—
In real cities, real houses, real time.

D. J. Enright

TWO POEMS

Matins

The wanner function of the grey
Surrounds their richer night like ribbons:
When they turn away, what happens
Precipitates suspended day.

That meta-physical renege
Provokes a colder war's attrition.
They'd vainly seek the warm tradition
In their strange twilight state of siege.

Shoving aside the little loves,
They make their new religion right:
White to adorn its acolyte
He has the collar, she the gloves.

John Holloway

Advice from the Specialist

"Look, John," you say, "I'll tell you . . ." So I
thought
You would. They always tell me in the end.
"The one that really mattered got away . . .
It isn't easy . . . I'm the awkward sort . . .
Not everyone would . . . still, you're a friend—"
Furl up your pants, parade your feet of clay.

I can't quite see you as a tragic figure—
Freighted with a groaning deep-sea cargo
At last you fetch up boldly from down under:
The genuine article is surely bigger
Than you: and sets an absolute embargo
(Or nearly) on rattling tin, and calling it thunder.

Is more my kind. Oceans of alcohol
Would have to be slopped out before I'd blab:
Although of course I could. Did you know I've been
Buffeted about just like a rubber doll?
But my corpse laid out upstairs upon the slab
Is really not for show. That's why it's green.

Well . . . should we not prefer quotidian
Achievement, to these violent heart-attacks
That leave a crude red stain, a splodge of plush?
What keeps our razors out is razor-thin,
Yet halts the vital deluge in its tracks,
Betraying a mere gentle-rosy-flush.

John Holloway

TWO POEMS

Malatesta

Today I kiss the hand of scholarship,
Ask papal blessings on my poisonings
And need credentials. But the Ottoman
And many a doge employ the emergent type,
The Englishman with one expensive suit,
Demobilized with nothing but a flair.

Being for hire, and therefore no man's creature,
Urbane, I seem invulnerably glib;
Yet desperadoes turn a dozen coats
And still display their vulnerable side.
There is the shape they favour in the glass:
In Rimini, the prince is deified.

Donald Davie

Naval Architecture

As raw and rude-abutting as a ship
Shored up above the Lagan or the Clyde,
The mind endures a new apprenticeship
And takes its own bleak rudiments for guide.

In primitive simplicity of plan,
Astonishingly, pitifully bare,
A grille of ribs, the stiff Leviathan
Gesticulates against the heavy air.

This re-instatement of the orthodox
Becomes a shape that flees across the sea;
A hounded mind is pathos on the stocks,
That learns its action from its poverty.

Donald Davie

TWO POEMS

The Quarrel

Even the warmth's separating thing;
One stoops within his chair, his head between
His hands: her hands are still. The dark coals cling

Together, fall apart. Flames intervene
And separate the coals. But two still sit
As though the bright flame were a darkened screen.

Shadows leap up the wall and seem to fit
The room, a kind of curtaining; these two
Within the room have now no need of it,

Coldly they linger when the fire is low
But even ashes fall together when
The flame expires (the hearth warm) but these two

Have no place for cold ashes to lie in.

Elizabeth Jennings

During the Hungarian Uprising

In crisis now I walk
The tidy troubled street
And every face I meet
Seems deeper than before
And when we stop and talk
Our sentences mean more.

Strangers as well as friends
Set subterfuge aside
And now refuse to hide.
What they hugged hard and near,

I mean their private ends,
On this day disappear.

Yet even so I see
Not general looks of pain,
Not eyes whose surface strain
Is like all other eyes:
The differences remain
For all identities

Clutch at compassion which
Joins but can never make
Faces the same. We break
Towards each other. Here
In helpless grief we reach
And bear each other's fear.

Elizabeth Jennings

ANNIVERSARY

These are my thoughts on realising
That I am the same age as my father was
On the day I was born.

As a little scarlet howling mammal,

Crumpled and unformed, I depended entirely on someone
Not very different from what I am today.

When I think this over,
I feel more crumpled and unformed than ever:
I ask myself what I have done to compare with *that*.

It also makes me aware, inescapably,
Of having entered upon the high table-land,
The broad flat life of a mature man.

Where everything is seen from its actual distance,
E.g. childhood not so remote as to seem a boring myth,
Nor senility as something that awaits other people.

But deeper than that,
It is like entering a dark cone,
The shadow thrown across my life by the life it derives from.

And deeper than that still,
It is the knowledge that life is the one communicable thing.
It called. I heard it from where I slept in seed and liquid.

The patterns of seed and brine coalesced in a solemn dance,
Whence my life arose in the form of a crest,
And has carried itself blindly forward until now.

In ignorance of its uniqueness until now,
Until I stumbled over these thoughts solid as bricks,
And like bricks fearsome in their everyday squareness.

John Wain

SUCCESS STORY

To fail (transitive and intransitive)
I find to mean *be missing, disappoint,*
Or *not succeed in the attainment of*
(As in this case, *f. to do what I want*) ;
They trace it from the Latin *to deceive* . . .

Yes. But it wasn't that I played unfair:
Under fourteen, I sent in six words
My Chief Ambition to the Editor
With the signed promise about afterwards—
I undertake rigidly to forswear

The diet of this world, all rich game
And fat forbidding fruit, go by the board
Until—But that *until* has never come,
And I am starving where I always did.
Time to fall to, I fancy: long past time.

The explanation goes like this, in daylight:
To be ambitious is to fall in love
With a particular life you haven't got
And (since love picks your opposite) won't achieve.
That's clear as day. But come back late at night,

You'll hear a curious counter-whispering:
Success, it says, you've scored a great success.
Your wish has flowered, you've dodged the dirty feeding,
Clean past it now at hardly any price—
Just some pretence about the other thing.

Philip Larkin

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